

Lies, Brian

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The Bats are back

Local author to debut new book at music festival

BY GILLIAN SMITH, EDITOR

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The bats are back and this time they are teaming up with the Duxbury Musical Festival to celebrate the importance of music in the community. Local author and illustrator Brian Lies will start off his nationwide book tour on July 27 at the festival, where he will read excerpts from his new book, "Bats in the Band." As Lies reads selections from his book, South Shore Conservatory students and faculty will be playing musical selections that are connected with specific parts of the book. "My bats are very egalitarian and like lots of different kinds of music, so we are going to showcase a variety of different music styles," he said. Lies, whose first illustrated children's book was "Bats at the Beach," said he uses his own life experiences for ideas for the books. The newest one, his fourth "Bats" book, is set at the Priscilla Beach Theatre in Plymouth. The theater is the longest-running summer stock barn theater in the country, with actors such as Paul Newman, Paul Gallagher, Veronica Lake and Rob Reiner gracing the stage over the years. "I was thinking about how vital music is in Duxbury, with all of the amazing programs for students and adults," Lies said. "It seemed like a good idea to try to tie it in with the music festival and the folks at the South Shore Conservatory actually carried it much farther than I could have imagined."

Lies' wife, Laurel, performed in a number of shows at the theatre during college and often tells a story about how, at the most dramatic moment in a production of Godspell, a bat flew over the heads of the actors. Thus, "Bats in the Band" was born. Lies illustrates all of his books, which takes about nine months to complete. "I have a rather slow illustration style because of all the details," he said. "I paint in a very traditional way of doing an underpainting first and then bringing in values and colors to build up the painting over a period of time." Once the book is finished and printed, Lies starts to think about his book launch. For each book, he tries to enhance each bookstore visit for both kids and their parents. In the past, he has created a robotic bat out of a Thule roof rack, giving the "bat" a 12-foot wingspan and transforming the car into the BATSmobile. This year, Lies' car will become the "bat-wagon," as in "bandwagon."

In preparation for the book tour, Lies is building a PVC pipe organ, similar to the one played by the Blue Man Group. He plans to create an organ that will boast a full octave with sharps and flats. At book events, he will hang the organ off the side of the "bat-wagon" for visitors to play. On top of all that, he is currently constructing two fiberglass bats that will stand about two-and-a-half feet tall and will go on top of the car.

"It's just some light fun," Lies said. "It's a way of attracting people at the bookstore and getting them to come over to check out what's going on."

At the music festival, Lies will have a giant copy of the book fabricated. When it is opened, it will be six feet wide. There will also be a "musical petting zoo," where kids can test out different musical instruments.

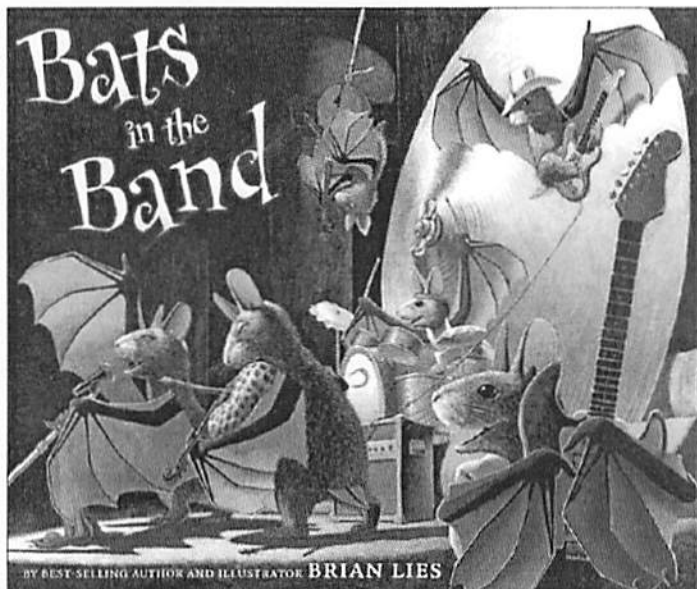
"It will be a great way to expose kids to instruments and music," he said. One of Lies' bucket list items is to be good enough at playing an instrument that he could play in front of an audience. "Unfortunately, that is not going to happen for me," he said. "It's a real gift that we have this wonderful music school in our midst and so many talented musicians coming to town."

Looking back on his "Bats" career thus far, Lies said he expected "Bats at the Beach" to be a one-off, not the start of an exciting and unusual book career. He uses the bats to look at things from a different perspective.

"I look at the way we do things as humans, mull over why those things are important to us, and then look at it from the point of view of the bats," he said. "The bat books are all about things that are important in my life, and with their big ears, it seemed that the bats would really appreciate music. It's fun to imagine the things we do as humans

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except upside down and at night."



Duxbury resident Brian Lies will debut his latest book at the Duxbury Music Festival.



Author Brian Lies